

EXAMINER'S AMENDMENT & REASONS FOR ALLOWANCE

I. EXAMINER'S AMENDMENT:

An examiner's amendment to the record appears below. Should the changes and/or additions be unacceptable to applicant, an amendment may be filed as provided by 37 CFR 1.312. To ensure consideration of such an amendment, it MUST be submitted no later than the payment of the Issue Fee.

Authorization for this examiner's amendment was given in a telephone interview with Jeffrey King (Reg. No. 58, 791) on 07/01/2008.

The application has been amended as follows:

In the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) In an electronic document handling system, a method of manipulating documents comprising the steps of:

displaying a first list of documents, wherein the first list of documents lists the documents that are selected for inclusion in an open stack;

displaying a second list of documents, wherein the second list of documents list documents that have not been selected for inclusion in the open stack;

displaying a user interface control operative to obtain selections from a user of documents from the second list for inclusion in the open stack;

generating a staple data object representing an association of selected pages of at least two selected documents;

generating an electronic cover sheet for the staple data object, wherein the electronic cover sheet includes a visual indication that the existence of the association of selected pages and selected documents together at one time has been cryptographically secured by the staple data object;

accepting from [[a]] the user a list of at least one page of at least two electronic documents;

referencing each page or each electronic document in the list as an item of the staple data object;

prompting for the staple instruction by presenting the user with a stapler icon which, when selected, represents a staple instruction;

accepting the staple instruction from the user when the user selects the stapler icon, wherein for each of the at least two selected documents, if a document is not stored in a permanent storage, the document is copied to [[a]] the permanent storage to create the permanent copy of the document and the staple data object is updated to refer to the permanent copy of the document; and

cryptographically securing the combination of the pages of the at least two electronic documents of the staple data object in response to receipt of the staple instruction, thereby creating an unalterable indicator of

the existence and integrity of the association of selected pages and selected documents together at one time.

2. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the step of accepting a list is a step of accepting a manually input list.

3. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the step of accepting a list is a step of accepting a computer-generated list.

4. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising a step of presenting the user with an online form as an aid to selecting pages or documents for association as [[a]] the stack.

5. (Canceled).

6. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising a step of copying the selected pages and selected documents in [[a]] the stack to static storage.

7. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising a step of copying the selected pages and selected documents in [[a]] the stack to a local storage device local to the electronic document handling system.

8. (Canceled).

9. (Currently Amended) In an electronic document handling system, a method of associating documents comprising the steps of:
generating a stack object representing an association of selected pages and selected documents;
generating an electronic cover sheet for the stack object, wherein generating an electronic cover sheet for the stack object further comprises:
storing the electronic cover sheet in a stack database, where it can be referenced;

accepting from a user a list of at least one page of at least one electronic document;

referencing each page or each electronic document in the list as an item of the stack object;

accepting a staple instruction from [[a]] the user, wherein for each of the selected pages and selected documents, if a selected page or a selected document is not stored in a permanent storage, the selected page or selected document is copied to [[a]] the permanent storage to create a permanent copy of the selected page or selected document and the staple data object is updated to refer to the permanent copy of the selected page or selected document;

cryptographically securing the stack object in response to receipt of the staple instruction, thereby creating an unalterable indicator of the existence and integrity of the association of selected pages and selected documents together at one time, wherein cryptographically securing the stack object in response to receipt of the staple instruction further comprises:

using a stack signature to secure the stack object, wherein the stack signature is a checksum of the contents of all of the selected pages and selected documents in the stack, signed by the a digital signature of [[a]] the user or the a digital signature or private key of [[a]] the system;

opening the secured stack object upon receipt of a stack open instruction;

presenting the contents of the secured stack object for perusal by the user;

accepting additions and deletions of items on the secured stack object; and

resecuring the secure stack upon receipt of a stack restaple operation.

12. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1 wherein the step of generating an electronic cover sheet for the stack object further comprises:

generating controls for adding and deleting selected pages and selected documents from the stack.

13. (Canceled).

II. **REASONS FOR ALLOWANCE:**

Claims 1-4, 6, 7, 9, and 12 are allowed.

The following is an examiner's statement of reasons for allowance:

Interpreting the claims in light of the specification, Examiner finds the claimed invention is patentably distinct from the prior art of record, as argued by Applicant in the Response dated 04/14/2008.

The closest prior art:

Ferguson (US 6820094) teaches generating a staple data object (Col.4;Line 29 - Col.5, Line 14 and Col.11, Line 36- Col.13, Line 6); generating an electronic cover sheet for the staple data (Col.19; Lines 1-55); accepting from a user a list of at least one page of at least two electronic documents (Col.11; Line 21- Col.12, Line 57); referencing each page or each electronic document

in the list as an item of the staple data object (Col.4; *lines 29-57 and Col.6; Lines 38-62*); accepting a staple instruction from a user (Col.16; *Line 11 - Col.17, Line 11*).

Khan et al. (US 6401206) teaches cryptographically securing the combination of the pages of at least two electronic documents (Col.3, *Lines 48-52 and Col. 4, Lines 46-62*).

Schmid et al. (US 5659164) teaches the use of an unalterable indicator (*the Abstract, Col.4, Lines 38-37, and Col.5, Line 29- Col.6, Line 3*).

The prior art does not expressly teach in combination all Applicant's claimed limitations. In particular, **Claim 1** recites the features: *"generating an electronic cover sheet for the staple data object, wherein the electronic cover sheet includes a visual indication that the existence of the association of selected pages and selected documents together at one time has been cryptographically secured by the staple data object; accepting the staple instruction from the user when the user selects the stapler icon, wherein for each of the at least two selected documents, if a document is not stored in a permanent storage, the document is copied to the permanent storage to create the permanent copy of the document and the staple data object is updated to refer to the permanent copy of the document; and cryptographically securing the combination of the pages of the at least two*

*electronic documents of the staple data object in response to receipt of the staple instruction, thereby creating an unalterable indicator of the existence and integrity of the association of selected pages and selected documents together at one time"; and **Claim 9** recites the features "generating an electronic cover sheet for the stack object, accepting a staple instruction from the user, wherein for each of the selected pages and selected documents, if a selected page or a selected document is not stored in a permanent storage, the selected page or selected document is copied to the permanent storage to create a permanent copy of the selected page or selected document and the staple data object is updated to refer to the permanent copy of the selected page or selected document; cryptographically securing the stack object in response to receipt of the staple instruction, thereby creating an unalterable indicator of the existence and integrity of the association of selected pages and selected documents together at one time, wherein cryptographically securing the stack object in response to receipt of the staple instruction further comprises: using a stack signature to secure the stack object, wherein the stack signature is a checksum of the contents of all of the selected pages and selected documents in the stack, signed by a digital signature of the user or a digital signature or private key of the system."*

The Examiner asserts that the claims overcome the prior art of record when

the limitations are read in combination with the respective claimed limitations in their entirety.

Dependent claims are allowed as they depend upon allowable independent claims.

Any comments considered necessary by applicant must be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee and, to avoid processing delays, should preferably accompany the Issue Fee. Such submissions should be clearly labeled "Comments on Statement of Reasons for Allowance."

Contact information

- III. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Maikhanh Nguyen whose telephone number is (571) 272- 4093. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday - Friday from 9:00am – 30 pm. If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Doug Hutton can be reached at (571) 272-4137.

The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

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